

USAWC03 STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR COLOMBIAN SECURITY AND STABILITY

by

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ABSTRACT

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Despite the long-term struggle against insurgencies in Colombia, over the years the U.S. support for Colombian security and stability has focused primarily on counter-drug operations. The attack of September 11, 2001 gave way to a renewed energy in the war against terrorism. The renewed energy influences the level of support the U.S. provides for Colombia. Is the U.S. policy towards Colombia the right one? Does it guide the formulation of a coherent strategy employing the right balance of ends, ways and means in pursuit of our national objectives? This paper provides an analysis of U.S. policy towards Colombia. It reviews U.S. national interests, policy, and strategy towards Colombia. Additionally, it reviews and assesses Colombia's own initiatives and makes policy recommendations.

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EFFECTIVE SUPPORT OF COLOMBIAN SECURITY AND STABILITY

INTRODUCTION

Colombia has serious debt pressures, insurgency problems, and an uncontrollable narcotics industry, all of which has generated serious internal security and stability problems. An essential characteristic of a state is its ability to protect its people. It does this through an integrated system of political, military, law enforcement, judicial, economic and social structures. A state that fails to protect the vitality of these critical structures endangers its very existence as well as the security of bordering states and its entire geographic region. Is Colombia a failing state? That is a tough question to answer, however; there are indicators that many of the characteristics that define failed states reside in Colombia today. Because of "spillover effects," domestic issues often become transnational, such as with the drugs, weapons, and people that move across borders.¹ Colombia is at risk and the U.S. has committed to providing assistance and support for its security and stability.

Until recently, the U.S. support of Colombian security and stability focused primarily on counter-drug operations. The attack of September 11, 2001 gave way to a renewed energy on the war against terrorism. This influences the level of support the U.S. provides to Colombia. President George W. Bush's administration is prepared to involve the U.S. more directly in Colombia's 40-year insurgency battle. He now advocates the use of U.S. military advisors and equipment in a campaign against guerillas who want to overthrow the Colombian government.² The momentum gained by the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) attributed to this policy change.

A central element in national security is the development of policies and strategy that support a nation's national interests and values. On December 4th, 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell made the following remarks at a press conference in Bogota, Colombia:

"Today Colombia is engaged in its own war against terrorism and the narcotrafficking that funds it. The United States stands with the people of Colombia in this struggle. The President of Colombia (President Uribe) has committed his administration to taking the difficult steps needed to provide security throughout Colombia and we support him in those efforts. He is also committed to making the necessary investment in social and development programs to promote long-lasting peace and stability in Colombia. Security and economic development, sustainable development, are linked with security to create an environment where people want to come and invest in Colombia, to visit Colombia. And as they come and invest and visit Colombian and bring resources into Colombia, jobs are created. And when people see these jobs, they

will see alternatives to growing illicit crops. They see the benefit of supporting the democratic process, and that, in return, enhances security. It's a cycle that repeats over and over.....We support your new national security strategy. It is a comprehensive plan to build a healthy democracy. A key part of that strategy, indeed, the part that makes everything else possible, is that element of the plan directed towards defeating the deadly combination of terrorism and drugs.”

—Colin Powell, December 4, 2002

Secretary Powell's statement implies that the U.S. support goes beyond military and includes assistance for democracy building, anti-corruption, and social and economic development. While this may be true, the U.S. financial outlays weigh heavily on U.S. military assistance as compared to other types of support. Is the U.S. policy towards Colombia the right one? Does it guide the formulation of a coherent strategy employing the right balance of ends, ways and means pursuit to our national objectives? This paper provides an analysis of U.S. policy towards Colombia. It will review U.S. national interests, policy and strategy towards Colombia. Additionally, assesses Colombia's own initiatives and makes policy recommendations.

ANALYSIS OF U.S. INTEREST IN COLOMBIA

Before defining U.S. national interests in Colombia it is critical to understand why national interests are important and what part they play in shaping national security strategy and military strategy. German émigré Hans Morgenthau was well versed on the concept of national interests. He was a realist and believed that nations should go to war because their national interests were threatened, not out of concern for abstract ideas. Morgenthau saw two levels of national interests, the vital and the secondary.³ Clarity about American national interests demands that the current generation of American leaders think harder about international affairs than they have ever been required to do.⁴ Suffice it to say the U.S. has a wide range of national interests. Interests derive from our values or ideology, our constitution and way of life, and alliances with other nations. The Commission on America's National Interest has broken national interests into three broad categories (vital, important, and peripheral). Vital interests are conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance Americans' survival and well-being.⁵ Important interests are conditions that, if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans.⁶ Peripheral interests are important and desirable conditions, but ones that have little direct impact on the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans.⁷ Protection of national interests is not the sole factor behind U.S. national

security strategy. Since the beginning of our democracy, our policies and actions have also been guided by our core values—political and economic freedom, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.⁸ Our history is replete with examples of where we have come to the assistance of other nations who share our same values and interests. As one reads this paper, I would ask that the reader reflect on how we define American national interests and values in assessing U.S. policy towards Colombia.

The U.S. has interests, responsibilities, and commitments that span the world. As a global power with an open society, the U.S. is affected by trends, events, and influences that originate from beyond its borders.⁹ The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review Report identifies the following U.S. national interests:

- Ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action, including:
 - U.S. sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom
 - Safety of U.S. citizens at home and abroad
 - Protection of critical U.S. infrastructure
- Honoring international commitments, including:
 - Security and well-being of allies and friends
 - Precluding hostile domination of critical areas, particularly Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral (region stretching from south of Japan through Australia and into the Bay of Bengal)
 - Peace and stability in the Western Hemisphere
- Contributing to economic well-being, including:
 - Vitality and productivity of the global economy
 - Security of international sea, air, and space and information lines of communication
 - Access to key markets and strategic resources

The U.S. interests in Colombia and Latin America are much different now than in the past. During the Cold War, Latin America rode a roller coaster in terms of U.S. attention and interests. At times, U.S. policy focused intensely on the region as presidents worried about its vulnerability to communist ideologies and Soviet influence.¹⁰ Now, U.S. interests have less to do with communist ideologies and Soviet influence and more to do with the economic, political, and asymmetric threats that permeate the 21st Century. Colombia is important to the U.S. for several critical reasons. First, its geographic location and economic potential make it an anchor

of regional security for the northern Andean-Caribbean region. Its proximity to the Panama Canal and access to South Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea has strategic implications on freedom of navigation and commerce. Second, Colombia's role in the international drug trade has shifted from a grower and exporter of marijuana in the 1970s to a major grower, processor and transnational shipper of coca and heroin today. Third, profits from the illicit drug industry finance all facets of the armed conflict in Colombia: drug traffickers, paramilitary groups, the security forces, and guerilla groups. The supply of drugs and the money it provides to terrorist organizations in Colombia threatens U.S. national interests. Testifying July 11, 2002 before a Senate panel, a State Department official said the success of Andean nations' efforts against narcotics "is vital to our own national interests in promoting the spread of strong democratic institutions, the enhancement of trade and investment opportunities, and the reduction of narcotics production and trafficking that threaten our society."¹¹ Reports also indicate Colombia lacks the capacity and willingness to control illicit drug trade and terrorist organizations in Colombia. The spillover effects of Colombian-based drug trafficking activity and terrorism are a threat to Panama, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela.¹² Of particular concern is the current crisis in Venezuela under President Hugo Chavez's leadership. Venezuela is the third largest supplier of oil to the U.S. Over the past several months, Chavez's political opposition has led a series of protests and strikes that have brought the oil industry in Venezuela to its knees. The opposition called these strikes to force the left-wing populist Chavez to resign and hold early elections. The general strike has since ended, however, political opposition remains high and Chavez has stated that he will not resign under political pressure. More directly connected to U.S. policy in Colombia, Chavez has reportedly courted a relationship with Cuban leader Fidel Castro and has deviated from his pre-election rhetoric of wanting to help Colombia secure an end to terrorism. This rhetoric dissipated shortly after Chavez took office and positive relations between Colombia and Venezuela have been on the decline. Colombia accuses Chavez of holding the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), both terrorist organizations, to the same status of the Colombian Government, essentially calling them co-equals. Chavez denies this characterization; however, there is evidence that he is sympathetic to the terrorists' cause, and more alarming, to have provided arms and sanctuary to the FARC and ELN.¹³

Terrorist organizations in Colombia receive 70% of their financing from the illicit drug trade. The growing nexus between terrorist organizations and drug trade has evolved to a point where money from drug trade has become their dominant financial support apparatus. It is for

these reasons that the United States must remain engaged with the Government of Colombia (GOC).

CURRENT U.S. POLICY AND STRATEGY IN COLOMBIA

The 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States of America outlines U.S. policy on counter-terrorism. The policy is to cut off the terrorist financing and help ensure countries in need have the military, law enforcement, political, and financial tools necessary to isolate and destroy terrorist organizations.¹⁴ The recently released National Strategy for Combating Terrorism articulates the strategic intent on combating terrorism. A quote from President George W. Bush amplifies that intent: "We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act." The overall U.S. Counterterrorism Policy guidelines make no concessions to terrorists and strike no deals; bring terrorists to justice for their crimes; isolate and apply pressure on states that sponsor terrorism to force them to change their behavior; and bolster the counterterrorism capabilities of those countries that work with the U.S. and require assistance.¹⁵ To support this policy, the United States has developed a strategy using all instruments of national power to achieve four basic goals: defeat terrorists and their organizations, deny sponsorship, support, and sanctuary, diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit, and defend U.S. citizens and interests at home and abroad.¹⁶ Taking into account all that was just said, President Bush's policy towards Colombia supports the Colombian government's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, intensify counter-narcotics efforts, foster socio-economic development, address immediate humanitarian needs, and end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism.¹⁷ Embedded in this policy are specifics about counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism efforts.

The way in which past Colombian administrations dealt with terrorist groups has conflicted in some ways with U.S. policy. For example, the previous president (Pastrana) negotiated with the terrorists and was able to attain political status for the FARC. The government gave the FARC a large piece of land as an enclave (*despeje*) to entice peace talks. Under Pastrana, these negotiations dragged on for three years before collapsing in February, 2002. In contrast, the U.S. makes no concessions to terrorists and strikes no deals. Given that fact, it is unlikely that the U.S. would engage in direct talks with any of Colombia's terrorist groups. The U.S. may tacitly support Colombian dialog with terrorist groups so long as concessions do not violate the

intent of U.S. Counterterrorism policy and that any talks lead to reduction in violence and threat to Colombian society and the state.

The U.S. National Drug Control Strategy is the guiding document that lays the way for U.S. counter-drug activities. It is a balanced strategy connecting three arrows aimed at one goal: reduce the use of illegal drugs in the U.S by 25% in five years. The three major arrows include stopping drug use before it starts (demand), healing America's drug users (health care), and disrupting the market (supply).¹⁸ The latter arrow gives energy to U.S. counter-drug policy in Colombia. According to the Department of State, the counter narcotics policy in Colombia is to support the GOC in attacking every element of the drug trade and to assist re-establishment of government control and the rule of law in areas threatened by terrorism.¹⁹

The U.S. counter-drug policy in Colombia articulates a set of ends, ways and means. There are four objectives to the policy. First, eliminate the cultivation of opium poppy and coca leaf. Second, strengthen Colombia's capabilities to disrupt and dismantle major drug-trafficking organizations and prevent their resurgence. Third, destroy the cocaine and heroin processing industries and stop the diversion of licit chemicals into illicit channels. Fourth, implement alternative development projects where viable to encourage growers to abandon their narcotics crops in favor of licit economic activities.²⁰

The course of action to achieve these objectives is a combination of economic, security, judicial assistance and alternative development assistance programs. The Andean Regional Initiative (ARI) is one way that the U.S. will achieve its goals. A program under ARI is the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI). This initiative balances elements of law enforcement and security programs, social and economic development, alternative development, judicial reform, and economic growth projects.²¹ It maintains funding to support various programs in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and the Andean region.²² Funding for Colombia supports several broad categories to include operations and maintenance of air assets, Colombian National Police, Army Counter-drug Mobile Brigade operational support, and crop eradication programs.²³ Congress enacted \$1.3 billion in FY 2000 emergency funding for counter-narcotics activities, primarily in support of "Plan Colombia." "Plan Colombia" is a GOC initiative to curb illicit drugs and re-establish civil order.²⁴ The U.S. supports "Plan Colombia" through economic, military and other means.²⁵ Further, in FY 2002, Congress provided additional funds to the Department of State for ACI. Of the total funding appropriated for ACI in FY 2002, Congress directed \$215 million for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for bilateral economic assistance

The U.S. employs a wide variety of instruments to support its objectives in Colombia. The Secretary of State has de-legitimized the terrorist organizations in Colombia by designating the

FARC, ELN, and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Under U.S. law, it makes it illegal for persons in the United States or subject to U.S. jurisdiction to provide material support to these terrorist organizations; requires U.S. financial institutions to block assets held by them; and enables the U.S. to deny visas to representatives of the group.²⁶ This label also puts pressure on the Colombian government to deal more forcefully with them.

United States military personnel and civilian contractors have assisted the Colombian military and counter-drug units over the last couple of years. The U.S. Army has shared operational-level intelligence, trained Colombia's counter-narcotics brigade and aviation personnel, and has helped establish a counter-narcotics infrastructure, such as radar sites and airstrips.²⁷ Until recently, the military was limited to training counter drug units. In the coming year, U.S. military personnel will expand training beyond counter drug units. The expansion of U.S. military training support comes from the long-standing belief that there are linkages between terrorist organizations and drug trade, and that you cannot tackle one without going after the other.

The U.S. employs other national resources and interagency expertise to support Colombia. For example, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has helped establish electronic interdiction information sharing and has funded a Sensitive Investigation Unit (SIU) program. The DEA has trained hundreds of vetted law enforcement officials to investigate and dismantle the most significant drug-trafficking organizations.²⁸

The risk of going after the illegal drug trade without an aggressive attack on terrorist organizations is a road to potential failure. The U.S. has allocated \$731 million for the ACI and a relatively small number of advisors. This is little investment considering the regional security and economic implications of failure. The current approach relies heavily on the Colombian Army and counter-drug units' ability to achieve success in drug crop eradication and interdiction, and counter-terrorism. The GOC must gain control of its territory and prevent terrorist organizations from protecting drug processing labs and other illicit installations and taxing coca crops.

Current policy is not without criticism. An article written by Winifred Tate in *Foreign Policy In-Focus* offers sharp criticism and states that the current policy has failed to achieve its objectives. She further argues that fumigation campaigns targeting peasant growers actually work to the guerrilla's advantage by further exacerbating social tensions and says there is a climate of discontent that has helped swell the ranks of the FARC and has cast the guerilla organization as the defender of the small peasant farmer.²⁹ Tate offers alternative courses of

action and recommendations toward a new foreign policy focusing on three areas. First, the U.S. should lend its full support to a negotiated settlement of Colombian's internal conflict. Second, Washington should suspend all aid to the Colombian security forces until effective measures are in place to reduce military violence conducted with the complicity of the Colombian military. Third, the U.S. drug control assistance should shift toward strengthening sound investigative capabilities of civilian judicial institutions and stimulating sustainable development activities for farmers currently involved in illicit crop production.³⁰ While this is a different course of action, it would be politically unacceptable and would fall short of success. The terrorist organizations would not negotiate in good faith, knowing that they control much of the rural territory and operate in many ways with impunity. The Colombian government must get control of the territory that manifests these vices. Suspension of U.S. aid would further deteriorate the problems. Colombia needs more aid, not less, so long as there is scrutiny of human rights violations through a comprehensive vetting process.

The above sections talked about U.S. interests, policy and strategy, but did not necessarily make a case as to the effectiveness of U.S. support for Colombian security and stability. To make that case, one must first have an appreciation of Colombia's problems and review the effectiveness of their own initiatives. With that background, one can then measure the effectiveness of U.S. support.

COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT, ECONOMY AND DEFENSE

Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America with over 43 million people and is one of the oldest democracies in the Western Hemisphere. It has a republic form of government made up of three branches: Executive—(Chief of Staff and head of government), Legislative (bicameral Congress) and Judicial (Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Council of State, Superior Judicial Council). Two political parties, Liberal and Conservative, dominate Colombia's political environment. Over the last 60 years, the struggles of both political parties have led to civil wars and regional conflicts. During their last conflict, La Violencia (from 1948 to 1953), 145,000 people were killed. Since the end of La Violencia, the two parties collaborated in a power sharing arrangement that excluded other political views. The hegemony enjoyed by these two parties exacerbated Colombia's inequitable distribution of wealth. The Human Development Report of 2001 indicated that the richest 20% of the Colombian people control over 61% of the wealth. This coupled with an economic crisis including a 20% unemployment rate, drug trafficking and terrorist organizations have become attractive options for many Colombian citizens.³¹

A fierce counterinsurgency war has permeated Colombia's landscape for the past 40 years. The counterinsurgency war stemmed from La Violencia. It pits the Colombian state forces and their paramilitary allies against the FARC and ELN. Despite demobilization of other groups, hope for the transition of guerrillas into unarmed parties has been undermined by protracted violence by guerilla forces, government human rights abuses, and failed negotiations and dialog between governmental and insurgency leaders.

The internal armed conflict affects virtually every part of Colombia. More than 60,000 people have died since 1985. The vast majority of the deaths were among non-combatants, which further exacerbates the political pressures to solve this long-term problem. Until recently, Colombian strategy has provided little signs of progress. The Colombian government suffers as much from internal problems as from insurgency threats. According to a former Colombian judge (Luz Estalla Nagle), the real causes of Colombia's insurgency and illicit drug industry are a weak government, inequity, an absence of citizen participation, institutional moral and cultural corruption, and an ineffective legal system.³² While this is a true statement, it is unlikely that other means could be effective without improving the security of Colombia first. If a government is inadequate and cannot bring the nation's potential power to bear upon an issue, that power might as well not exist.³³ This begs the question of is the government of Colombia relevant?

Colombia is a free market economy that has experienced a fiscal crisis in the last 10 years. Their economy has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$88.2 billion (2001 projected) and has a per capita GDP of \$2,087 (2001 projected). Their GDP composition by sector is 19% agriculture, 26% industry and 55% services (2001 estimate). Colombian trade includes over \$14 billion in exports and \$12.7 billion in imports. Major exports markets include the United States, Germany, Netherlands, and Japan. Major suppliers of imports are the United States, Venezuela, Germany, Japan and Panama. Since 2000, the Colombian economy has grown at a modest 2.4% of real GDP per year, however, unemployment rate is high and there is a cash deficit of 3.0% of GDP. Moreover, Colombia's external public debt is \$22.0 billion, which equates to 25% of their GDP. As a comparison, the U.S. external public debt is 8.5% of U.S. GDP. The high ratio of public debt to GDP puts added pressure on their economy.

The high unemployment rate in Colombia creates displaced people desperate for work, especially in rural areas. Unfortunately, many of these people seek paid jobs with narco-traffickers and terrorist groups. According to some reports, an insurgent or narcotic group recruit receives as much as 25 times more per month as an army conscript, and more than twice as much as an army officer volunteer is paid.³⁴ These facts have lead to two extreme

threats: financial pressures and a personnel-recruiting source for the illegal drug industry and terrorist groups.

The military strength of a nation is usually a good gauge for national power. Military power is more than just the aggregation of personnel, equipment and weaponry.³⁵ Leadership, morale, and discipline also remain vital factors of military power. The gradual infection of a nation's military by incompetence, waste, and corruption can weaken a nation's armed forces.³⁶ The Colombian security forces number about 250,000 uniformed personnel: 145,000 military and 105,000 police.³⁷ The primary purpose of the Colombian military is to defend Colombia and serve as the military arm of Colombia's national power. Colombia sits on the top of South America, along with Venezuela, with coastlines along the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean. Its proximity to these bodies of water and the Panama Canal gives it a sphere of interest and influence not shared by many South American countries.

The contemporary threat facing Colombia's defense establishment is internal. First, is the long-standing threat from the FARC and ELN and the uncontrollable narcotics industry. Second, threats posed by AUC and the documented proof that some Colombian military police detachments continue to promote, work with, support, and profit from paramilitary groups. This type of activity eats away at the foundation and military credibility and damages public trust and confidence. The new Colombian president is committed to eliminating this behavior. President Uribe recognizes his forces are under resourced, and has taken active measures to improve their capabilities.

NON-STATE ACTORS IN COLOMBIA

Non-state actors have played a key role in weakening Colombia's ability to control its territory and reduce the flow of drugs. Viewed in the context of military history, fourth-generation warfare is highly irregular. "Asymmetric" operations—in which a vast mismatch exists between the resources and philosophies of the combatants, and in which the emphasis is on bypassing an opposing military force and striking directly at cultural, political, or population targets—are a defining characteristic of fourth-generation warfare.³⁸ Do we see asymmetric operations happening in Colombia or have the illegal drug industry and terrorist organizations challenged the security and stability of Colombia as a result of the weaknesses of the state?

The illegal production and distribution of drugs in Colombia has grown to unprecedented levels and has manifested into a major source of financing for terrorists and paramilitary organizations. The illegal drug industry can be described as a consortium that functions in much the same way as virtually any multinational Fortune 500 company.³⁹ The high profit

margin enjoyed by the illegal drug industry facilitates state of the art communications and security apparatuses to protect the industry against counter-drug efforts. With these advantages, decisions are made quickly that can ignore or supersede laws, regulations, decisions, and actions of the Colombian government.⁴⁰ The power and violence of the drug industry came to permeate all facets of Colombian society, as signified by the saying *‘plata o plomo’* – silver or lead – meaning “take the bribe or take a bullet.”⁴¹ The escalation of the drug industry in Colombia imposed a very high cost on the ordinary citizens. The cost has risen dramatically as organized armed groups have joined the drug trade. The drug trade has blossomed to a point where about 90% of the cocaine entering the U.S. originates in Colombia. Two-thirds of the heroin seized in the U.S. is of Colombian origin. The U.S. cannot ignore these facts if it is serious about its National Drug Control Policy of reducing domestic appetite for cocaine and heroin, which constitute an estimated cost of \$45 billion. The money from the trade in illegal drugs, called “harcotraficking,” feeds the coffers of the guerillas, whose attacks give rise to citizens’ self-defense organizations—paramilitaries.⁴²

Colombia is statistically the most terrorism-afflicted nation in the world. In 2001 alone, 191 acts of terrorist incidents occurred on Colombian soil, killing an estimated 3,500 people. The number of terrorist incidents in Colombia in 2001 was more than all other nations combined. The genesis of terrorist activity dates back to the mid-1960s. The insurgents are essentially a Marxist-Leninist *foco* (i.e., insurrectionary armed enclave) in search of a mass base.⁴³ The popularity of these groups is very low among the Colombian public. Because of the general lack of appeal to the Colombian population, the insurgents have developed a military organization designed to achieve the “armed colonization” of successive areas within the Colombian national territory.⁴⁴ The intent is to liberate and mobilize the “disaffected and the dispossessed” population into an alternative society.⁴⁵ With this strategy in effect, one can argue that ideological values these insurgency groups once had now have less meaning.

The FARC, established in 1964, was originally the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party, and received much of its initial support from Cuba. It is Colombia’s oldest, largest, most capable, and best-equipped terrorist group. The FARC is organized along military lines and includes six urban fronts.⁴⁶ The U.S. State Department’s Report on Patterns of Global Terrorism catalogs numerous incidents of terrorist activities perpetrated by FARC. It engages in bombings, murder, kidnapping, extortion, hijacking, as well as organized paramilitary operations against Colombian political, military and economic targets. Although their original strength in the 1960s was under 1,000, the approximate strength now is 18,000-armed combatants and supporters.⁴⁷

The ELN is a Marxist insurgent group. Urban intellectuals inspired by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara formed it in 1965.⁴⁸ It engages in much of the same types of activities as the FARC. Smaller in nature, they only comprise approximately 3,000-armed combatants. The ELN possesses a modest military capability. They focus much of their effort on assaulting energy infrastructure, damaging pipelines and the electrical distribution network, mostly in the mountainous areas of the north part of Colombia.

The FARC and ELN are rival forces, however, share common interests. Their ideology represents the rural poor against Colombia's wealthy classes and they oppose U.S. influence in Colombia. They also oppose the privatization of natural resources, multinational corporations, and right-winged violence.

In response to threats posed by the FARC and ELN, the late 1980s saw the emergence of vigilante groups. These groups formed as paramilitary organizations and out of concern for the GOC's inability to effectively deal with the FARC and ELN. The resultant was counter-productive. The paramilitaries are responsible for as many as three-quarters of Colombia's political killings.⁴⁹ In 1996, these groups joined with drug lords' private militias to form the AUC.⁵⁰ This group is comprised of several right-wing paramilitary groups supported by wealthy landowners, drug cartels, and segments of the Colombian military.⁵¹ They have been ruthless in their attacks and have assassinated leftist guerrillas, politicians, activists, and other Colombian civilians. The AUC favors respect for private property, an end to the leftist guerrillas' kidnappings and extortion, recognition of the AUC as a legitimate political force, and negotiations with the national government and leftist guerrilla groups. It is estimated to be 12,000 members strong and is growing rapidly. They actively recruit from families terrorized by leftist guerrillas and by groups that protect drug traffickers. They provide the landowners, who finance them, with some social services and with defense against leftist insurgents. In September 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft indicted AUC's paramilitary leader and two other AUC members on charges of smuggling some 17 tons of cocaine into the United States and Europe since 1997. Colombia outlawed paramilitary groups in 1989. However, Human Rights Watch has documented ties between AUC and the Colombian armed forces. This fact led to the U.S. Congress putting political pressure on the Colombian Government to end the military-paramilitary partnership and to dismantle and disarm the paramilitary groups.

COLOMBIA'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ITS OWN SECURITY AND STABILITY

All sovereign nations are responsible for their own security and stability. Most have the ability to meet this obligation, unfortunately others do not without the assistance of willing and

able nations. The challenges posed to the GOC have risen to a point where they need outside assistance to help them meet their basic security and stability obligations. Four basic responsibilities fall on the GOC. First, it must gain control of all of its territory by swiftly defeating the threat forces that have maintained a noose around its neck for nearly half a century. Second, it must end corruption and enhance the legitimacy of its legal system. Third, it must enforce its own laws and significantly reduce the supply of illegal drugs, specifically cocaine and heroin. Fourth, it must improve its human rights record. Changes of any magnitude in these four areas will undoubtedly bring more foreign investment and economic improvements. I am not advocating foreign governments hold support hostage to unrealistic constraints and limitations, however, Colombia must first take responsibility for itself if it is to have effective security and stability.

The sequence of the four areas is essential. The GOC must first secure its land and make progress in defeating the forces that threaten its security. As long as hostile forces control vast amounts of land and continue intimidations, very little progress is possible in other areas. The terrorist groups influence and control over 40% of Colombian territory. By Colombia's own estimates for 2001, the FARC and ELN were accountable for some 35 percent of Colombia's internally displaced persons, mostly rural peasants, while the AUC was responsible for some 43 percent.⁵² The FARC and AUC continue their deadly practice of massacring one another's alleged supporters, especially in areas where they were competing for narcotics-trafficking corridors or prime coca-growing terrain.⁵³ This pattern of violence and terrorism cannot continue without severe consequences. As articulated in "Plan Colombia," the GOC is faced with the challenge of establishing and securing a society where the Colombian state can exercise its true authority and fulfill its essential obligations.

Colombia's past strategy has failed to achieve many of its intended results because of a lack of military and national police proficiency, resources, and the inability of the government to place law enforcement units in all municipalities across Colombia. A good news story is that public support favors of the government, not the terrorists. The public popularity and base of support for the terrorist groups has fallen to as low as two percent of the Colombian population. In the past several decades, there have been a growing number of people moving from rural to urban areas. Nearly 70 percent of all Colombians now live in urban settings. The urbanization of the Colombia's population, and the fact that the guerilla movement has its roots in rural areas, gives way to a general lack of support and momentum for any kind of sustained guerilla warfare. However, a risk is that the terrorist groups will bring the violence to the cities as was recently

illustrated by a terrorist made bomb that destroyed a popular night club in Bogotá's financial center, killings 32 people.

With U.S. assistance, the Colombian military and police have improved, however their proficiency, skills, leadership and funding remain insufficient for a sustained campaign to oust the FARC and ELN. With increased training, funding and external support from the U.S. and other countries, Colombia could possess the capabilities to assert authority over its national territory and win the counterinsurgency war. However, leadership and the application of capabilities will be the driving force for success.

Dismantling of the AUC and their operations is a necessity if there is to be success in Colombia's counterinsurgency war. The AUC is at the heart of the human rights abuses in Colombia. For success to prevail, the military and police must have the trust of confidence of the people. The people of Colombia are aware of the military's long history of support for paramilitary organizations. Disregard for public opinion and concern is tantamount to failure. As explained by Carl Von Clausewitz' trinity of war, the people, commander (army) and the government are intertwined. These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another.⁵⁴ The military should take on the burden of action against the insurgency groups and denounce any support, cutoff all resources, and take away any authority possessed by the AUC. Defeating terrorist threats and establishing legitimate authority over its territory will take time and require a coherent and complex Colombian strategy. Uncontested, the price will be thousands more dead, kidnapped and terrorized, and a nation fumbling away its legitimacy.

Simultaneous with securing its own land and defeating terrorist organizations, Colombia should make strides to end corruption and enhance the legitimacy of its legal system. According to the Transparency International Annual Report for 2002, Colombia is ranked 57th among all nations on the Corruption Perception Index. Corruption has cast a shadow of doubt over the GOC throughout much of the nation's history. Attacking and defeating this virus is essential for progress in security and stability. A recent example of government corruption involved 71 police officers, including a former top anti-drug official, of taking more than \$2 million in U.S. aid. The aid money was to pay for the counter-drug forces' operations but was instead spent on personal expenses. This case is under investigation and is being pursued by prosecutors.⁵⁵ Accountability protects citizens' rights from being trampled, ensuring that laws will be applied fairly and accurately.⁵⁶ Confidence will prevail when citizens know that their government will defend their rights to highest standard possible.

A democratic, accountable government educates its citizens so as not to exclude them from decisions that affect their lives.⁵⁷ There are many threats to the basic security of Colombia. Nation states behave because of certain fundamental characteristics of the system of which they are a part. The idea is simply that the system itself exerts a kind of force on the states that compels them to behave and react in certain predictable ways.⁵⁸ The GOC has made errors in attempting to accomplish the goals laid out in their Constitution. They had virtually surrendered its authority in 1999 by setting aside the *despeje* for the FARC, a huge risk that backfired.⁵⁹ A government that surrenders its authority for any reason risks long-term political, military, economic and domestic implications. The Colombian Constitution demands that its leaders are responsible to “defend national independence, maintain territorial integrity, and ensure peaceful coexistence and the enforcement of a just order.” For a period, the Colombian people watched in disbelief as their government searched helplessly for any possible solution, regardless of the ways and means.

Recently, Colombia has taken steps to strengthen its reputation and to develop a coherent strategy for both its security and stability. “Plan Colombia” is a strategy for peace, prosperity and institutional strengthening. This plan seeks to recover confidence among Colombians by rescuing basic norms of social coexistence, improving economic distribution, promotion of democracy, justice, territorial integrity, the generation of employment conditions, and respect for human rights and the conservation of public order, among other things. Hostage to the plans’ success is external monetary support and loan guarantees. This multi-year strategy will cost an estimated \$7.5 billion. It is too early to gauge the success or failure of “Plan Colombia.” However, it is not without critics. The United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged Colombia’s president to respect human rights in his fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. Annan said “government measures should be based on full respect of international human rights law.” Since taking office August 7, 2002, President Uribe has adopted emergency powers allowing his government to detain people without warrants, impose curfews and levy a war tax. This action created criticism in the U.S. Congress. The Leahy Amendment tied U.S. support to a human rights vetting process. The European Union and its member states also have expressed serious reservations about “Plan Colombia,” especially the emphasis on using the Colombian armed forces to achieve a military solution to the narcotics problem.⁶⁰ This is of course, a complete misreading of “Plan Colombia.” The plan comprises more than a military solution and expands across all elements of power. The ultimate success or failure of “Plan Colombia” will depend on an ad-hoc coalition of support, along with their unique demands, and with the GOC own initiatives to end corruption and enhance the legitimacy of its legal system.

As with any organization, change occurs through leadership. Without it, the vision, goals, and objectives of an organization are in peril. President Uribe has a mandate and has a very aggressive program for change in Colombia. Key to its success will be how he leads his country through change. The biggest mistake leaders make when trying to change government programs or organizations is to plunge ahead without establishing a high enough sense of urgency. This error is fatal because changes always fail to achieve their objectives when complacency levels are high.⁶¹ A second key ingredient for effective change is creating a sufficient and powerful coalition. A coalition made up of its leaders, its citizens and external support is essential for Colombia. Individuals alone, no matter how competent or charismatic, never have all the assets needed to overcome tradition and inertia.⁶² The first place to begin building a coalition is within the GOC. The executive branch of government must first clean its own house by ending corruption within its own ranks. Without accountability to standards expected under a civil society, corruption will continue to act as a virus against change and will hinder any attempts to build a legitimate and effective coalition.

Colombia has a long record of human rights abuses. I believe President Uribe is taking positive action to improve its record and is making progress. He has done so with some risk and external scrutiny. Since taking office, he has extended a state of emergency several times while stepping up the military campaign against the terrorists. Without oversight, these new security measures could lead to violations of fundamental rights. Evidence of human rights abuses have surfaced in one of the "Rehabilitative and Consolidation Zones." These zones put military commanders in charge of all security forces and gives them authority to conduct searches without court warrants, restrict travel, impose curfews, and question civilian residents and visitors. Arrest first and investigate later appeared to be the army's motto.⁶³ Colombia's Constitutional Court challenged the extended power of government and ruled many of the methods governing the zones to be unlawful.⁶⁴ Additionally, based on interviews with witnesses and former participants, the Human Rights Watch believes that the military continues to organize, encourage, and deploy paramilitaries to fight a covert war against the FARC and ELN.⁶⁵ Colombia's leadership should engage a strategy to rid itself of a culture that perpetuates human rights abuses. This is a tough challenge for a weak Justice System. The judicial system has to improve and systematically seek out and prosecute the people responsible for human rights violations. This is an easy statement to make, hard to realize, but essential to the security and stability of Colombia.

The fight against narcotics cultivation and illicit drug trade must be one of Colombia's top priorities. Despite the death of Medellin cartel drug kingpin Pablo Escobar in 1993 and the

arrests of major Cali cartel leaders in 1995 and 1996, Colombian drug cartels remain among the most sophisticated criminal organizations in the world, controlling cocaine processing, international wholesale distribution chains, and markets.⁶⁶ Colombia has a drug control strategy that is very aggressive in writing, but lacks results in execution. It has yet to make any significant achievements towards its stated goal of reducing the cultivation, production and distribution of narcotics by 50 percent. The GOC should improve in three key areas: the eradication capacity of the national police, establishment of control of territory in the south, particularly in the Putumayo Region, and the strengthening of the judicial system to reduce corruption. Keeping these issues in mind along with external support, Colombia can make positive progress in their fight against illicit drugs.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO U.S. STRATEGY

The U.S. has important national interests in Colombia that require shaping and engagement. The escalation of violence and the uncontrollable drug production threatens Colombia, its neighbors and the United States. This is more than a drug problem and an isolated terrorist threat without global reach. The nature of evolving threats in Colombia brings together a nexus of the narcotics trade and terrorist activity that could foment instability elsewhere in the Andean region.⁶⁷ Left to its own devices, and without significant external support, Colombia risks falling into a failed state category, leaving the Andean region scattered with lawlessness and a breeding ground for terrorist organizations in the Western Hemisphere.

In concert with current U.S. policy and objectives, I recommend increased political and economic support for Colombia. Furthermore, I recommend better synchronization of the U.S. and GOC counter-terrorism objectives. An enduring element in U.S. policy towards Colombia is supporting their efforts to end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism. The U.S. should continue to put political pressure on the GOC to expand security over its uncontrolled territory. Territorial control is fundamental to achieving any successes in defeating terrorism and reducing supply of illicit drugs. The GOC made a step in the right direction by increasing defense spending from 3.5 percent to 5.8 percent of GDP in 2003.⁶⁸ The increase in money is important as long as it is applied to a course of action that will achieve results.

Since the GOC internal security and territory control strategy has proven unsuccessful over the years, president Uribe should consider new options. One option could be a territorial reinforcement strategy based on the foundation of ownership and accountability as the underlying metrics for success. If people have pride of ownership over something, they are

more likely to take care of it—organizations are the same. If a geographic region is cared for and resourced, it is less likely to attract undesirable attention (e.g., terrorists and drug traffickers). Basic territorial reinforcement involves maintaining of a sense of ownership of an area by the community around it and by the officials responsible for its protection. Listed below are some ideas to enhance territorial control:

- Assign local governments geographic regions of responsibility and supplement their resources to assist in the security of those regions
- Territorial control should be decentralized to the local level and reinforced with state and national resources as appropriate; the intent should be to demilitarize internal territorial control and hold local governments and law enforcement agencies accountable
- Solicit OAS and UN support for monitors and advisors to assist internal security forces and police organizations with techniques and systems for long-term security
- Significantly increase civilian police patrols (aerial and ground) to define acceptable and unacceptable behavior and to enforce the law; this must be done in a legitimate way and in regard for human rights
- Utilize technological devices where appropriate to economize forces and enhance security
- Establish local government sponsored, trained, and commanded civil defense groups

The U.S. State Department's report to Congress on U.S. policy towards Colombia identifies the expected financial costs of supporting Colombia. The report indicates that the complexity of Colombia's problems will require substantial financial support from the United States and the international community.⁶⁹ The international community has offered relatively little support for "Plan Colombia's" total bill of \$7.5 billion, of which Colombia will provide \$4.5 billion, over five years. The international community has offered nearly \$600 million in financial commitments (minus the U.S.). The disbursement of the international money has been slower than hoped, due to bureaucratic, programmatic, and security issues.⁷⁰ The U.S. has provided Colombia with nearly \$2 billion since 2000. The U.S. should continue diplomatic dialog to narrow the gap in financial support among the international community. Other nations have stakes in the security and stability of Colombia. For example, 22 percent of Colombia's exports and 15 percent of its imports are with the Andean Community of Nations, yet none of them has made financial commitments in support of "Plan Colombia." Additionally, nearly half of the cocaine that enters Europe originates in Colombia. The additional support would not only assist

Colombia but also would send a message that narco-terrorism is among the top priorities of the international community.

The U.S. should better synchronize and condition its support on a unified set of achievable objectives concerning the terrorist organizations. This is not to imply a need for more U.S. forces in Colombia or direct U.S. military involvement in fighting the terrorists. However, it has become clear that the terrorist groups are entrenched in Colombia's landscape and that they are directly involved in narcotics production, trafficking, money laundering and other criminal activities, including murder, extortion, and kidnapping. Colombia has been battling insurgencies and right wing paramilitary forces for years with little success. Their objectives are loosely defined and in some regard conflict with U.S. policy. For example, a condition of the FARC and ELN political-military scheme demands a negotiated settlement between the government and the guerrillas. The U.S. policy is not to negotiate with or legitimize terrorist organizations. Moreover, U.S. action against Al Qaeda and the Taliban illustrates how the U.S. intends to confront terrorist organizations that threaten the U.S. interests. This paradox should be resolved and a common set of objectives agreed too. A step in the right direction is the new U.S. authority allowing military assistance for the GOC's effort to combat designated terrorist organizations. The new authority to train and equip the Colombia pipeline security brigade in the Arauca region should help. The question is, is it enough? Given the right strategy and resources, total defeat of FARC and ELN is a realizable objective. Colombia should not settle for negotiation. The world is full of examples of where terrorists fail to live up to negotiated settlements. Anything less than total disarmament of the FARC, ELN, and the AUC will continue to threaten Colombia.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. strongly wants Colombia free from terrorist groups and an uncontrollable supply of illicit drugs. The American cultural tapestry enjoys many of the values and beliefs of every part of the world. Enduring U.S. values including individual freedom, tolerance, universal equality, choice of education, the family, and privacy, matched with U.S. national interests, justifies U.S. policy towards Colombia. The effectiveness of U.S. support for Colombia's security and stability is showing growing signs of success. Solving Colombia's challenges will take more than a few years. The real test will be the staying power and long-term commitment of U.S. support and the ability of the GOC to take the lead and endure the hard times ahead.

Failure to control drug trade and to defeat the terrorist organizations in Colombia negatively affects our ability to fight terrorism and the health of our nation. Moreover, it will

prevent the GOC's commitment to recover the state's central responsibilities of promoting democracy, monopolizing the application of justice, territorial control, generating conditions for employment, respect for human rights and human dignity, and the preservation of public order.⁷¹ Illegal drugs are responsible for the deaths of almost 20,000 Americans a year. There is little doubt that drugs help supply the deadly work of terrorists. The U.S. should make three basic changes to its strategy. On the political front, the U.S. should exercise diplomatic initiatives to expand the burden of financial support among the Andean community of nations as well as the European Union. The GOC has acknowledged that "Plan Colombia" will fail without sustained international support. The U.S. should not stand idle and consume a disproportionate share of the burden. The U.S. should continue pressure on the GOC to develop and implement new ways and means to secure its uncontrolled territory. Without basic security, there is little hope for reducing illicit drug production and the threats that terrorism pose for democratic institutions. On the military side, clear and achievable counterterrorism objectives should be coordinated and synchronized between the GOC, the U.S., and the international community. Now is the time for a full court press to aid Colombia and to exploit actions against terrorist organizations and the narco-trafficking connection. We should be relentless in our effort and not let Colombia sink deeper into the brink of failure.

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